
CHAPTER 3



PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

APRIL 2002

3.1 Alternatives Considered

This EA analyzes the alternative development programs and plans to provide security improvements for visitor screening, and to install vehicle barriers around the Monument. Consistent with the proposed action, this EA addresses the environmental consequences of two build alternatives, as well as the impacts associated with maintaining the status quo, as follows:

- Alternative A (Below-Grade Alternative)
- Alternative B (Above-Grade Alternative)
- Alternative C (No Action Alternative)

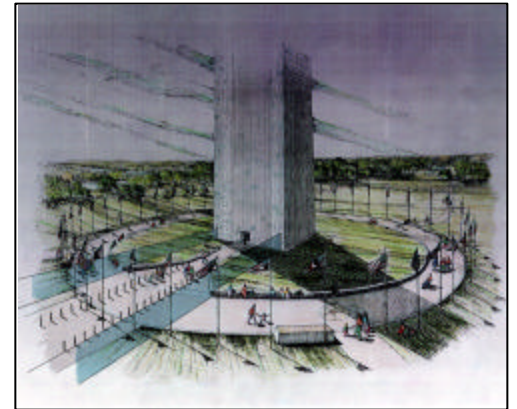
A series of functional goals and objectives were established at the onset of the planning process, as enumerated in the November 2001 *Program Requirements for the Washington Monument Permanent Security Improvements* distributed by the NPS. The two build alternatives propose to fulfill the goals and objectives through the following three types of physical improvements:

- Visitor screening facility
- Vehicle barrier system
- Grounds improvements

Other alternatives were initially considered for analysis in this EA but were eliminated from further assessment. It was determined that these alternatives do not satisfy the program requirements for security improvements while also fulfilling the functional goals and objectives for Monument and the Mall. These eliminated alternatives are included in Section 3.5 of this EA, “Alternatives Considered But Eliminated.”



Perspective drawing of Alternative A.



Perspective drawing of Alternative B.

3.2 Alternative A (Below-Grade Alternative)



Illustrative plan of Alternative A –
Below-Grade Alternative.

Alternative A includes the establishment of an underground visitor screening facility and a landscape vehicle barrier system. The visitor screening would be conducted in a below-grade facility that would be located between the east side of the Monument and the Monument Lodge. The vehicle barrier system would be provided by a system of bermed terraces and pathways. A diagrammatic plan of Alternative A is presented in Figure 3.2-2.

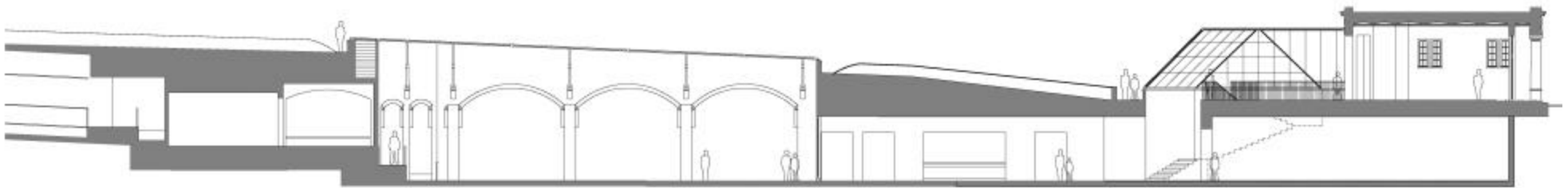
Visitor Screening

Visitor screening would be provided in a underground facility and passageway traversing approximately 230 feet from the Monument Lodge to a point adjacent to the elevator shaft of the Monument. This new facility would replace the existing above-ground visitor queuing area around the perimeter of the Monument plaza, the existing visitor screening facility located in a temporary building on the plaza immediately adjacent to the eastern side of the Monument, and the existing ticket distribution kiosk on the west side of 15th Street at Madison Drive.

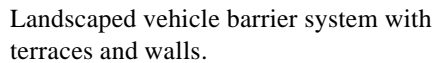
The Monument Lodge would be rehabilitated and adaptively used as the portal to a new underground visitor screening facility. The visitor facility would consist of approximately 16,000 square feet of space and include a ticketing/lobby area, and a security queuing and screening area with x-ray and magnetometer equipment. The facility would also include an educational and interpretive area, support space, restrooms, and a bookstore.

From the visitor screening facility, an underground passageway would continue toward the Monument in a gentle upward slope (less than 5 percent grade). The passageway would then penetrate the exterior below-grade wall of the Monument above the foundation and connect to the Monument's elevator core, which would be lowered one floor. The passageway would be architecturally enhanced with lighting and surface treatment of the walls and floors. A skylight would be installed flush to the ground with an east-west orientation to allow light into the screening facility and preserve the visual connection to the Monument.

Figure 3.2-1
Alternative A Visitor Screening Facility



Under Alternative A, a graded system of walled terraces and pathways would be constructed around the Monument to provide a barrier system that would meet the prescribed standards for stopping moving vehicles. This system would replace the existing double ring of above-ground concrete jersey vehicle barriers located in a 200-foot radius from the Monument.



Grounds Improvements



Under Alternative A, the 16th Street parking lot on the northern portion of the Grounds would be removed. The removal of the parking lot would allow the German-American Friendship Garden to be completed and would also allow the walkways northwest of the Monument to be configured in a more graceful manner.

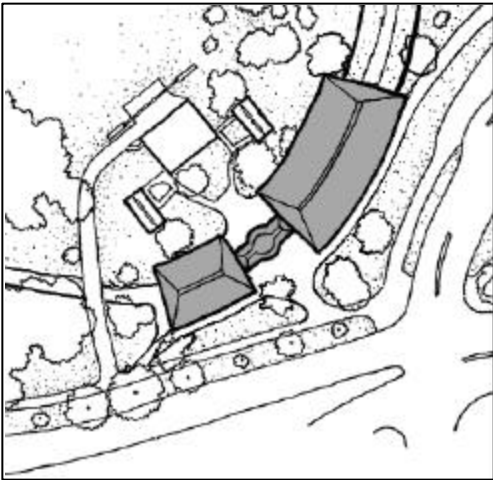
Figure 3.2-1
Alternative A Site Diagram



3.3 Alternative B (Above-Grade Alternative)



Illustrative plan of Alternative B – Above-Grade Alternative.



Site plan of the Alternative B visitor screening facility.

Alternative B includes above-grade security measures. Under Alternative B, the Monument visitor screening system would be located above-ground on the Monument Grounds away from the primary views and vistas, and the vehicle barrier system would consist of safety bollards located along the perimeter of the Grounds. Bollards are short, vertical posts used in landscaping to accentuate special features or provide direction and control of pathways. A diagrammatic plan of Alternative B is presented in Figure 3.3-1.

Visitor Screening

As part of Alternative B, a new above-ground visitor screening facility would be constructed in the southeastern corner of the Grounds at the Sylvan Theatre complex. This new facility would replace the existing above-ground visitor queuing area around the perimeter of the Monument plaza, the existing visitor screening facility located in a temporary building on the plaza immediately adjacent to the eastern side of the Monument, and the existing ticket distribution kiosk on the west side of 15th Street at Madison Drive.

The new screening facility would consist of 16,000 square feet in two buildings located in a less-visible and less-used part of the Grounds and clustered within an area of existing trees to minimize visibility and preserve sight lines. The eastern building would accommodate security procedures and an educational and interpretive area. The western building would accommodate visitor amenities, such as ticketing and restrooms. Since many of the visitor services functions would be accommodated in the new buildings, the Monument Lodge would be restored to its historic exterior appearance and be used for visitor restrooms and administrative purposes.

After visitors are screened with x-ray and magnetometer equipment at the new facility, they would be physically separated from the general public. Visitors and tour groups would wait for their reserved times. A secure pathway would be necessary to lead groups of visitors from the screening facility to the Monument entrance. The 8-foot wide pathway would be contained within a double row of fences. The inner fence would consist of 3-foot high bollards, linked by chains, located 2 feet from the edge of the pathway. The outer fence would consist of an 8-foot high glass-like wall located 12 feet from the edge of the path to create a secure corridor between

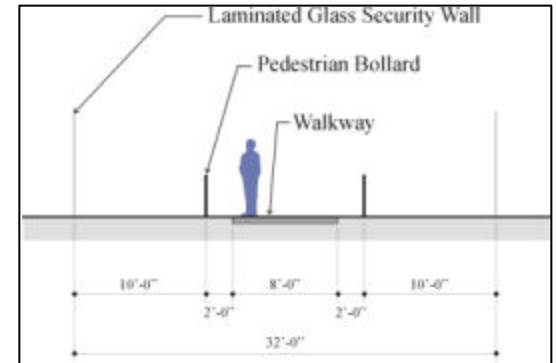
the inner and outer fences approximately 10 feet in width. The overall width of the double-fenced pathway would be 32 feet.

The double-fenced corridor would begin at the exit of the screening facility, bisect the Monument plaza and terminate at, but not attach to, the eastern face of the Monument. Law enforcement personnel would escort the visitor groups from the screening facility to the Monument. A double-locked door would be installed at the entrance to the Monument.

The outer fence must be configured to preclude the opportunity for unscreened items being passed through to visitors who have already been screened. While an 8-foot high fence would prevent joggers or other athletic and casual users from easily jumping over them, it is possible that the corridor might have to be fully enclosed to prevent items from being thrown over the fence.

Vehicle Barrier System

Under Alternative B, a ring of bollards would be placed around the perimeter of the Monument Grounds to provide a barrier system that would meet the prescribed standards for stopping moving vehicles. These densely placed bollards would replace the existing double ring of concrete jersey barriers located in a 200-foot radius from the Monument. Approximately 1,600 bollards would be placed in a linear fashion around the 1.25-mile perimeter of the Grounds, measuring 4 feet from the center of one bollard to the center of the next. The bollards would likely be simple, unadorned metal cylinders painted a neutral color. The bollards would be 42 inches in height and 14 inches in diameter, with a cap designed to discourage use as a seat. Moveable bollards and gateway barriers would be located at key pathway intersections to provide access for maintenance and emergency vehicles.

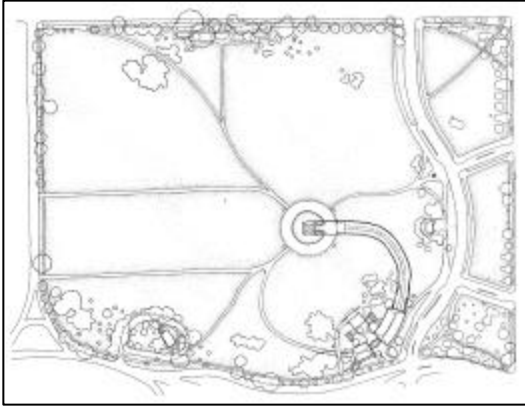


Section of 32-foot wide double-fenced security corridor.



Vehicle barrier systems consisting of security bollards are used to protect Federal facilities in Washington, DC.

Grounds Improvements



Site plan for Alternative B.

Alternative B includes a variety of improvements to the Washington Monument Grounds. With the shift of emphasis away from the Monument as the visitor screening and tour queuing area, the current asphalt paving of the plaza would be replaced with an interior grassy area and an outer hardscape ring. This grassy surface would help emphasize the simplicity of the white obelisk rising directly from the grassy mound. The grassy area would be edged with granite and surrounded by a low granite wall, which would be intended as a directional device to encourage circulation around the Monument and would serve as informal seating. The outer hardscape ring would consist of upgraded materials.

The walkways would be reconfigured to allow for easy pedestrian flow through the Grounds and to comply with accessibility standards. Alternative B also includes a non-secure pathway connection from the Monument to the Sylvan Theatre.

Under Alternative B, the 16th Street parking lot at would be removed. The removal of the parking lot would allow the German-American Friendship Garden to be completed and would allow the walkways to the north of the Monument to be configured in a more graceful manner.

Figure 3.3-1
Alternative B Site Diagram



3.4 Alternative C (No Action Alternative)



Existing temporary visitor screening facility.

As part of the environmental analysis process, the consequences of a No Action Alternative are also considered. Under the No Action Alternative, all existing structures and elements of the Washington Monument Grounds would remain in their existing use and condition. There would be no new development or reconfiguration of facilities. The No Action Alternative does not involve a return to a previous condition, but involves the continued use of existing temporary measures for Monument security, visitor screening and access, and vehicle barriers.

Visitor Screening

The existing visitor security system, which consist of NPS and U.S. Park Police personnel identifying, grouping, and isolating ticketed visitors in the plaza around the Monument, would continue under the No Action Alternative. At designated times, groups would be led to the interim screening facility to undergo security screening with x-ray and magnetometer equipment. This function would continue to occur in the temporary structure located adjacent to the base of the Monument. Following the screening, the group would proceed directly into the Monument under Alternative C.

Vehicle Barrier System

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing temporary concrete jersey barrier system would remain and be a visible part of the character of the Monument Grounds and the National Mall. Since suitable replacement of the temporary concrete jersey barriers is an initiative of the Bush Administration associated with homeland security, implementation of the No Action Alternative would necessitate further efforts to find a suitable replacement for the concrete jersey barriers.

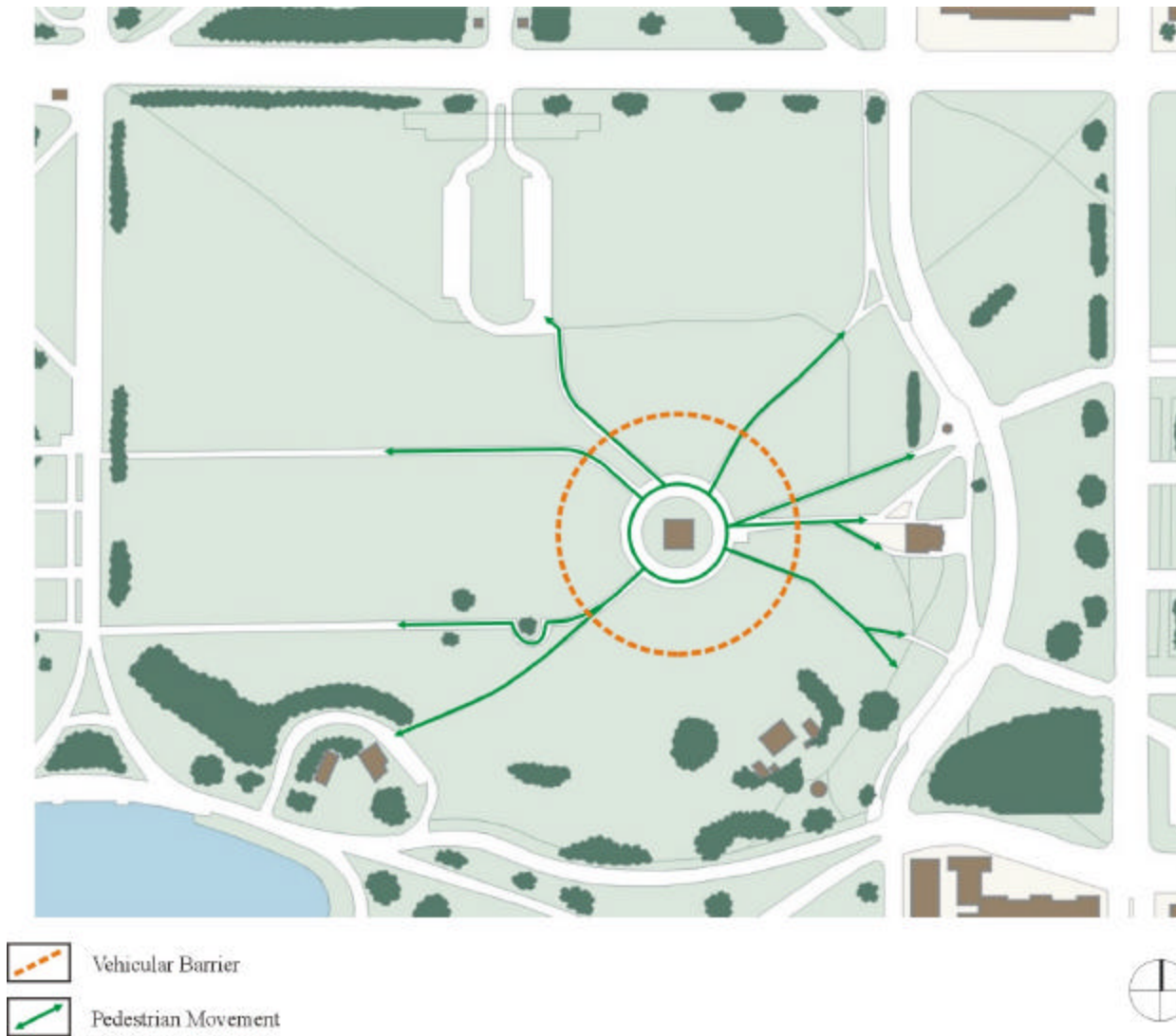
Grounds Improvements

The existing paths to the base of the Monument need to be made more accessible. Under the No Action Alternative, these paths would remain unimproved in their current locations. The 16th Street parking lot on the northern portion of the Grounds would remain and the German-American Friendship Garden would not be completed.



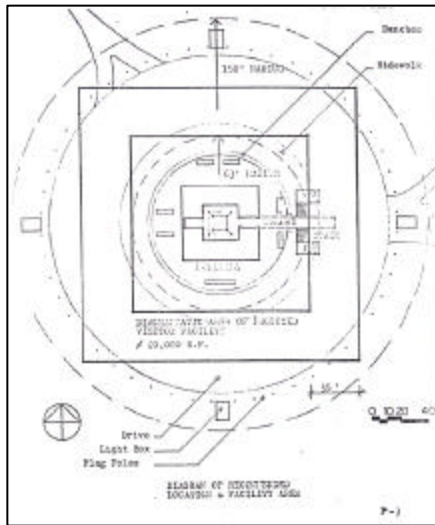
Existing temporary vehicle barrier system.

Figure 3.4-1
Alternative C Site Diagram



3.5 Alternatives Considered But Eliminated

As part of the current process to improve security at the Washington Monument, a number of alternatives were considered. Many of the ideas and concepts for these alternatives originated during planning efforts for the Monument Grounds over the past 30 years. The planning history for the Monument Grounds, including the underground visitor center shown to the right, is presented in Section 2.1. More recent planning efforts since 1998 have focused on addressing security concerns related to visitor access/screening, and vehicular barriers.



Previous plan for underground visitor center.

Access/Screening

An underground visitor center was first proposed in 1973 as a one-story underground building for visitor services and educational and interpretive space running completely around the Monument foundation. It was intended to connect with the Monument through a underground passageway to a new level below the elevator shaft.

Placing the screening facility on the ground level of the Monument itself was considered. However, this concept was rejected because it did not meet U.S. Park Police requirements that no weapons or explosives enter the Monument, and there was insufficient space to install a magnetometer and x-ray machine.

A below-grade/above-grade hybrid alternative to connecting an underground passageway directly to the Monument elevator was considered. In the hybrid alternative, the underground passageway would ramp up to the ground surface outside of the Monument plaza. Visitors would then access the Monument via a double-fenced pathway. The secured pathway portion of this alternative is similar to the longer pathway described under Alternative B. This option would require use of a double-locked door system at the Monument entrance/exit.

An alternative to an above-ground double-fenced pathway for pedestrians is a tram vehicle system. Under this option, passengers would be carried from the screening facility to the Monument via a secured, above-ground tram. This option would generate substantial pedestrian/tram conflicts unless a dedicated pathway was established. As a result, the tram option would be similar to the above-ground pathway component of Alternative B.

An above-grade visitor screening facility located at the Monument Lodge was rejected by review agencies. The facility would have been a new structure introduced into the primary viewshed.

Vehicular Barriers

An alternative vehicle barrier system that placed bollards around the perimeter of an expanded Monument plaza in the location of the existing jersey barriers was proposed in 2001. This concept was rejected by review agencies due to the inappropriate relationship of the bollards and the natural setting of the Grounds (bollards are typically located in urban settings along walkways and streets). In addition, the proposal presented difficulty in locating a screening facility and in maintaining separation of screened visitors and unscreened visitors.

3.6 Environmentally Preferred Alternative

CEQ's regulations implementing NEPA require a Federal agency to identify the alternative or alternatives that are considered to be environmentally preferable. In this case, the No Action Alternative appears to involve the fewest changes to the natural resource environment. However, this alternative would not allow for the necessary security improvements. In addition, the concrete jersey barriers would continue to obstruct important vistas and pedestrian movement to and from the Monument and Grounds. The incompatible addition to the Monument Lodge would continue to detract from the historic integrity of the Grounds, existing pathways would not be improved, and the 16th Street parking lot would continue to prevent completion of the German-American Friendship Garden. Finally, the heavy personnel staffing of the Monument and Grounds would continue to tax the U.S. Park Police. Therefore, the No Action Alternative is not the environmentally preferred alternative and the implementation of one of the two action alternatives is necessary to satisfy the purpose and need for the proposed action.

Of the two action alternatives, Alternative A would have the fewest adverse impacts and the greatest number of positive impacts. Under Alternative A, barriers and structures that detract from visual quality would be removed, pathways would be consolidated, and the compacted soil would be improved. Therefore, Alternative A, the Below-Grade Alternative, would be the environmentally preferred alternative.



There are several stands of trees on the Monument Grounds.

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